

NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN

BACKGROUNDER NO. 1-0148
ANITA CHAPMAN

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INTERIM REPORT OF OLYMPICS COMMISSION

ANNCR:

FIVE MONTHS AGO PRESIDENT FORD SET UP A COMMISSION ON OLYMPIC SPORTS TO DETERMINE IF THE UNITED STATES IS REPRESENTED BY ITS FINEST ATHLETES IN INTERNATIONAL AMATEUR EVENTS. THE COMMISSION HAS JUST ISSUED AN INTERIM REPORT THAT RECOMMENDS SOME BASIC CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE OF AMERICAN SPORTS. WE HEAR MORE ON IT NOW FROM VOA'S ANITA CHAPMAN: VOICE:

THE PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION FOUND AMATEUR SPORTS IN THE UNITED STATES SERIOUSLY FRAGMENTED AMONG COMPETING GROUPS THAT OFTEN HAVE NO COMMON PURPOSE. ONE RESULT HAS BEEN AN OVERALL DECLINE IN RECENT YEARS IN AMERICAN PERFORMANCE IN INTERNATIONAL SPORTS EVENTS.

THE COMMISSION PROPOSES A SOLUTION ADOPTED MANY YEARS AGO IN MOST SERIOUSLY-COMPETITIVE COUNTRIES, THAT OF A CENTRAL SPORTS AUTHORITY WITH POWER TO ORGANIZE AND DIRECT A COHESIVE NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR DEVELOPMENT OF AMATEUR SPORTS. DEVELOPMENT IS ACHIEVED NOW MORE BY WHIMSY THAN BY PLAN. AND IN SPITE OF THE ABUNDANCE OF FINE ATHLETES PRODUCED HERE, COMMISSION HEARINGS REVEALED SOME ATHLETES ARE DISCOURAGED BY JURISDICTIONAL DISPUTES WITHIN THE AMATEUR SPORTS WORLD TO THE POINT OF ABANDONING COMPETITIVE SPORTS.

REFORM SHOULD START WITH GOVERNMENT ACTION, THE COMMISSION BELIEVES. A NEW ORGANIZATION COULD BE CREATED, OR THE PRESENT U.S. OLYMPIC COMMITTEE COULD HAVE ITS MANDATE EXTENDED

TO INCLUDE NATIONAL SPORTS AS WELL AS THE QUADRIANNUAL OLYMPIC GAMES.

MAJOR EMPHASIS IN THE COMMISSION REPORT IS ON ORGANIZATION. ORGANIZATION IS VIEWED AS THE STRUCTURE THROUGH WHICH ATHLETIC TALENT WILL BE BROUGHT TO THE TOP. THEREFORE THE REPORT ALSO EMPHASIZES NEEDS OF THE ATHLETES. IT SEEKS TO FREE THE ATHLETE TO CONCENTRATE ON PERFECTION OF SKILLS. IT WANTS TO SEE HIS RIGHTS IN TERMS OF SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS CLEARLY DEFINED IN DOCUMENTARY FORM. IT WANTS TO DEVELOP SPORTS AMONG WOMEN, UP TO NOW GENERALLY DOWNGRADED IN COMPETITION, AND ENCOURAGE THE "MINOR" SPORTS -- THOSE WITHOUT THE CROWD APPEAL OF SKIING, FIGURE SKATING, SOCCER, BASEBALL.

COMMISSION MEMBERS FEEL THE GOVERNMENT WILL BACK THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS IF THE COST CAN BE HELD DOWN. THEREFORE THEY HOPE TO SEE STRUCTURAL CHANGES MADE FIRST, AND LATER WILL RECOMMEND THE TYPE OF EQUIPMENT AND BUILDING NECESSARY TO A SUSTAINED NATIONAL PROGRAM.

JS/RCS